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HOW TO WIN POULTRY PRIZES



PLAIN DIRECTIONS FOR
MATING, REARING AND EXHIBITING
PRIZE SHOW FOWLS.

By H. H. STODDARD,

EDITOR OF "THE POULTRY WORLD," AND "THE AMERICAN POULTRY YARD,"
AUTHOR OF "AN EGG FARM," "POULTRY ARCHITECTURE," "HOW TO FEED
FOWLS," "HOW TO RAISE POULTRY ON A LARGE SCALE," "POULTRY
DISEASES," "PLYMOUTH ROCKS," "WHITE LEGHORNS,"
"BROWN LEGHORNS," "LIGHT BRAHMAS,"
ETC., ETC.

HARTFORD, CONN.

1881.

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PREFACE.

MAN is combative, fond of emulation, and ever on the alert to possess something new. These peculiarities show themselves in various ways: sometimes in the display of dress or equipage, sometimes in trials of personal strength or endurance, and in other cases we see only a generous and good-natured competition about the possession of some desirable and useful article of property. This rivalry often causes genuine improvement in live stock, and results in benefit to all parties concerned.

A high civilization may unfit people for the enjoyment of a bull-fight, and any man with a cultivated intellect and good moral qualities will turn with disgust from a competition between men striving to "get outside" of the greatest number of eggs or oysters; but a refined and enlightened man may enjoy competition with others in the possession of the best horses, cattle or poultry.

We have written this book with special reference to those persons—increasing in number every year—who have a laudable desire to win prizes in our American Poultry Exhibitions, and to them we respectfully submit its pages.

HOW TO WIN POULTRY PRIZES.

THE annual poultry exhibition in this country has come to be an institution among us. This is comparatively a new thing, although it is now thirty years since the first public exhibition of the kind was held in America.

The first poultry show in England, of any prominence, was held at Birmingham, a year or two prior to our pioneer exhibition in the United States. *Now* these friendly competitive gatherings are held yearly, in both countries, in every State, county and district almost, where there dwell any considerable number of people.

And very agreeable entertainments they have proved, too, as well as profitable to the managers and contributors, and highly pleasing to the public generally, wherever they chance, from time to time, to be held. In so far as their effect upon the character of the domestic poultry now cultivated in this country is seen, a large and permanent improvement is manifest, as every one who is acquainted at all with what our poultry formerly was, and now is, will readily admit.

GROWTH OF POULTRY EXHIBITIONS.

Where there were a score of exhibitors, a few years since, there are now a hundred, at the least. Where in

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former times but a few breeds of fowls could be shown (and these none of the best), we may now count our Standard recognized varieties by dozens.

And while in 1849-50 we had but two or three organized poultry societies, whose members made up the contributions to *all* the shows in those days held, we have now one hundred distinct and separate organizations in this country—each one of which has, within the past two or three years, held its yearly show of fine poultry stock, at various points of the country—in the East, West, Middle States and South.

There are presented at these fine exhibitions, from time to time, in the principal cities and large American towns, thousands of cages of elegantly-plumed and beautifully-formed fowls, that are the admiration and the wonder of crowds of citizens, who are *not* “chicken raisers,” who gather in the spacious halls where these exhibits are held, to “see the wondrous sight;” and to learn there, for the first time, how innocent or how ignorant they have been, previously to these visits, of the true character of first-class modern poultry, as it is bred at the present day among us.

INFLUENCE OF THE SHOWS.

A quarter of a century since, a pair of young cockerels, dressed and marketed for roasters, that would weigh five or six pounds each, fatted for the spit, were a curiosity among the dealers in the shambles. Today, pairs of seven months old Light Brahma or Cochin cockerels, that draw each nine or ten pounds dressed, are a common thing in our markets everywhere. And the quality, too, has vastly improved, over that of the olden time. While the following

pages will be mostly devoted to the ornamental qualities of fowls, we could not refrain from saying what we have in favor of the fancier's influence, which, by increasing the interest in poultry, has placed upon the poor man's table, in increased quantity and better quality, at cheaper rates, a healthful, nutritious dish.

Five-and-twenty years ago we had the barn-yard breeds wandering about the farm—of all colors and descriptions—but mostly these were runts, and unsightly from their utter lack of uniformity in color, plumage or proportions. Now, we have our country places dotted over with clean-bred flocks of superb Light Brahmas, Cochins, great Dorkings, choicely-bred Games, fine Leghorns, showy Plymouth Rocks, beautiful Hamburgs, Polish and French fowls—all *new* in variety, and each a distinct breed, that is recognized by itself in our *Standard of Excellence*—and all of which have been bred and fostered by ambitious fanciers for years, with an eye to *exhibiting* their better specimens in competition for the liberal premiums offered by our societies at these modern poultry exhibitions.

The author of this book has, as a matter of business, already given ten of the best years of his life to bring about the existing prosperous and improved condition of things now referred to. And the public poultry exhibitions, working hand in hand with poultry literature, have accomplished the eminent success to which the poultry interest has now attained.

It is the object of this little volume to explain to the amateur, the novice, or the inexperienced breeder, how best he may operate with his favorite stock, and how he may in the easiest way manipulate his chosen fowls to bring

about the most desirable results in his attempts to rear exhibition birds.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF BREEDING.

It is only by a careful study of things which, at first thought, appear minute and unimportant, that the highest improvement may be attained in breeding.

The rearing of fine poultry is not in itself an insignificant matter; but there are many details, indispensable to success.

If a person starts on a journey, and the road is not familiar, he must needs make inquiry on the way, else have a chart or guide-book. To one who has not the advantage of experience and has not studied the matter, it may seem easy enough to breed high-class poultry. Says he: "Like produces like. If I procure a trio of Brahmas, Cochins or Spanish, give them good quarters, plenty of suitable feed, of course nature will attend to the breeding, and in due time I shall have a flock of fine chicks, like the original stock."

Many do this very thing, and are disappointed; not always, but in many instances. Why disappointed? Who will answer the question? The trio appeared fine—style, plumage, heads, combs, etc., superior. "Did you purchase the cock and hens of the same breeder?"

"Oh, no! It's against my principles to practice in-breeding. I purchased the cock of Mr. A., one of the most noted fanciers in the country. He has made a specialty of this breed for many years, and has taken the highest prizes at many of the principal exhibitions. I visited his yards, saw his stock, and there's no humbug

about it. His strain is excellent; and its excellence is the result of persistent patience and perseverance. I bought the hens of Mr. B., and he is scarcely less noted for his success; besides, those hens scored high. They are prize fowls. But the progeny is inferior in plumage, and there are marked defects in other respects.

"I paid a good price to start with, and I felt satisfied; felt willing to pay those two men for what I considered was the result of experience and wisdom on their part. And I supposed that I was starting with a double team, just at the point where Mr. A. and Mr. B. had arrived, having no doubt that I should win. But now I have receded, instead of holding my ground. Like a horse not caulked, on a slippery road, trying to go on, but sliding back. The case is similar to that of the Ethiopian poet:

'Sich a getting up stairs, nebber did see,
Get up one stair and fall down three.'"

Let us study this case, and see if we can account for such peculiar, unexpected and untoward results. Facts have been discovered by naturalists which hit this nail on the head. When two breeds dissimilar in plumage and other characteristics are brought together or crossed, the progeny will in some of the number follow the male, a few the female, and many neither, but break up into splashes and patches of color, resembling both of the breeds, or unlike either. This leads us to an important topic, to wit:

REVERSION.

All the "breeds" or varieties were made by selection. The race of fowls was, in the first place, made many-

colored by domestication, and from the tame mixed flock came the various breeds. Now, there is a tendency to revert back to what we will call the original domesticated flock every time you make a cross of the modern selected breeds. In other words, there is a *scattering*, when such cross is made, like the colors of a kaleidoscope. The reversion is most striking when two breeds very dissimilar in color are crossed; but the tendency to it is so strong, that when two strains of the same breed very similar to each other are united, as in the above case, false feathers will crop out through the influence of distant ancestry. It has been well proved, by many careful experiments, that the introduction of blood not akin gives a fresh impetus to the ineradicable tendency to take after remote progenitors.

Mr. A. had bred the cock pure; had kept for years within his own strain; had reared branches of the strain on his own grounds, or in other yards under his own control; had crossed and recrossed every year, establishing more firmly the standard markings, and every year sending out a greater number of meritorious birds. And Mr. B. had pursued the same course in producing the hens. Each breeder had a thoroughbred strain—the result of years—alike in standard points, yet not entirely alike in blood. In crossing these two strains the principle of reversion came in—though it had perhaps lain apparently dormant for generations—causing a black feather here, a white one there, and undesirable manifestations in other respects.

It is not asserted that a cross of two distinct strains will invariably produce these results. But there is a

liability of a considerable number of the progeny showing this effect of reversion. In some instances the cock might possess a remarkable degree of power, and overcome, by his procreative force, this tendency to revert, giving his chicks the peculiarities of his side of the house.

On the other hand, the peculiarities of the female side may be so strongly fixed by many years of systematic breeding, that the character of the progeny will mainly be determined by the hens. No doubt the more evenly balanced the mating in that quality commonly called prepotency, the greater the liability to reversion. It is a fallacy that the hen builds the house and the cock paints it. There is no such division of labor. It is a copartnership, into which both parties bring all the power, all the hereditary tendencies, active and dormant, of past generations. In one case the cock may predominate, and in another the hen in her line.

GROWING THE YOUNG STOCK.

Next to the judicious and proper mating of fowl stock, comes the method of growing the young birds properly, so that they shall prosper from the outset, and turn out the best of their class, when the time arrives for exhibiting.

The process of setting hens and hatching the chicks, we shall devote no space to in this treatise, for the reason that only the operator who is somewhat advanced in a knowledge of *these* ordinary details in fowl breeding should attempt the more difficult task of raising show birds. And if the poulterer has not previously acquired a familiarity with the first rudiments of chicken raising, he is not competent to undertake the other experiment.

Given the chickens hatched out safely, and we are ready to proceed to make the most of the younglings.

For six or eight weeks after their hatching no one can decide what the young birds may be at maturity. But, from the shell, whatever portion of the young stock is intended to be reared for exhibition birds, should be fed and managed with the nicest care. We have found that their first feed (for three or four weeks) is best if composed of *cooked* ingredients, invariably. Dry crumbs of stale bread, hard-boiled eggs, thoroughly boiled potatoes, and fine corn-meal—in equal parts—are an excellent aliment for the first month. This food should be given them half a dozen times in a day during this term. And if *milk* can be used, instead of water, to cook this food in, it will be much the better for them. Boiled rice and boiled whole wheat are also an admirable alternate dish. And *green* food of some kind, in constant supply, is a *desideratum*.

If the young birds are hatched out at the season of the year when the tender grass is starting, a run upon the greensward will improve them rapidly. When they are past four weeks of age, cooked meat and vegetables, mixed, may be given them daily, in small quantity, to great advantage.

During this early period the chicks must be kept absolutely exempt from vermin, or they can not thrive. This provision is all-important, be it observed. And the hen-mother should also be carefully watched, and constantly, too, in order that lice may not gather upon her body, and so be communicated to her brood.

By the end of the first or second month the sexes of

the chicks can be determined, and ordinarily the general color of the plumage can then be seen. The rapidity of development depends upon the breed. But with the Brahmas and Cochins we can not begin to cull the flock until they are three months old, or more. By that time the experienced fancier can decide very nearly how many prospective show birds he has been fortunate in securing, for the extra trouble he has been at, thus far in the year. In case of Plymouth Rocks "you can't most always sometimes tell" what they will make till four or five months.

Then follows the culling process. This should be done fearlessly. Out of a hundred chickens hatched, ordinarily twenty per cent. of the flock, or less, can only be counted on for future show birds. If but ten first-class fowls of a hundred can be brought up, that are prime specimens in all respects—in color, symmetry, good size, form and station—that wear a good (we won't say perfect) comb of their kind; that are well feathered upon the legs (if Brahmas or Cochins); that have neither hollow back, wry-tail, twisted wing-flights, high hip, show of vulture hock, spotted plumage, etc.—this proportion of the hundred will pay the raiser of such fowls very handsomely for his year's work. The other ninety chickens may be used, many of them, for breeders, and the rest will answer for table use satisfactorily.

From three months to six months old, the chickens hatched in March or April will come into warm weather well formed in size and in fine average condition; and during their first summer they will grow and thrive astonishingly, if cared for as we have herein recommended.

The one-fifth or one-tenth of the flock set aside as the finest and most promising for future use in the show-room, will henceforth require a continuance of extra attention; while the rest—that are not made broilers, roasters, or breeders of, as the case may be—can be allowed during the summer months, comparatively, to take care of themselves, if they can have unlimited range outside of their houses.

Your ten or fifteen prospective show chicks should every day be fed upon *system*, and with sound, nutritious food. They must not be *fattened*, however, at present. In the morning give them the warm cooked meal-and-potatoes mash. At noon cracked corn and whole wheat, or buckwheat occasionally. At night whole corn, with crushed bone and a small allowance of broken scraps—the latter not more than three times a week. Two or three times alternately in a week a dish of cooked coarse meat, such as harslets, or fish heads boiled up, will help their growth and aid digestion. And of *any* of all this variety of feed never throw before them more at a time than they will eat up clean. This plan saves unnecessary waste, and keeps the birds in by far the best condition.

Of course, it is understood that our fowls must be regularly supplied with fresh, pure water daily for drink. The allowance of milk also, in part, for the show birds, so long as it can be handily furnished them, will be a very good thing. They should have a roomy, dry, gravelly run, ample bath-boxes, and all this, of course. Without *these* provisions no fowls will keep in good health or grow well, however carefully they be fed and tended.

The author of these pages is aware that many readers

of his book will exclaim that "all this kind of attention and care *ought* to pay the man who bestows it upon his birds!" So it should. And so it will. But we are now writing of what we understand perfectly. And to such readers we say, with emphasis, if you desire to raise the very best fowls for exhibition purposes, and wish to own and show the choicest samples, in competition beside the contributions of our old fanciers of the present day, then you must thus attend to your work, and thoroughly, or you can not hope to be a winner among the crowd of well-posted breeders who do this very thing, year after year, as we have done it in past seasons, and as we now in detail recommend this method. What is worth doing at all, is worth doing well. No sloven can succeed with fowls.

"But all this entails a deal of trouble," urges another easy-goer. So it does, my friend. And if you expect to get on in this peculiar branch of fancy poultry raising *without* trouble, and labor, and thought, and care—from the day your chicks are hatched down to the hour when you ship them to the show, where you aim to win first and second prizes, nowadays—you entirely mistake your business, and should not attempt to "beat" your more active, enterprising, sensible neighbors, who *do* thus attend to the work, and who will continue, as hitherto, to carry off the palm you covet.

With this gentle reminder, in passing, we will now leave the three or four months old chicks to grow and flourish, under your care or that of your competitor, until fall, while we proceed further to point out "what we know about" the secrets of rearing show fowls to advantage.

CARE OF EXHIBITION FOWLS.

Show birds are always expected to be put before the public, when placed in competition, in their very best condition. And the measures necessary to bring the stock up to its highest state of perfection in beauty, cleanliness of plumage and general attractiveness, are quite legitimate, but are not in all cases so well understood by those who have good birds to show as these rules of preparation may and ought to be. We, therefore, propose to offer here some hints to the uninitiated on the subject of preparing to exhibit to the best possible advantage.

We take our selected birds—those which four or five months previously we picked from our flocks, for the purpose now in contemplation—and, from the score or less of these first-class samples, we *now* choose two or three pairs or trios which we intend to exhibit four or six weeks later in the season.

A special pen or house should be appropriated to the use of these birds for the next five or six weeks. The floor of this pen should be covered with clean dry sand two inches deep, and the birds should be allowed the most nutritious feed attainable, while they are now confined for a brief term.

The cocks must be kept by themselves, and the pullets also by themselves, during this term of preparation, in order that the plumage of both sexes may not be torn, ruffled, or disfigured. They should be supplied with clean fresh water every day, their premises should be thoroughly ventilated also constantly, and their food should be of sound grains, cooked meat and vegetables, with but little "green" feed (lest they scour); and at no time should

they be given more than they will eat up clean for the meal, since sour or stale feed is particularly injurious.

They must not be gorged, lest they grow fat and listless. They must not be over-fed, lest they get cloyed, and lose their needful appetite. But they should be furnished with *all* they will eat, regularly three times daily, and no more. Thus, they will not lose in "condition"—an important consideration, when they come to be placed under the eye of the critical judge.

The best *staple* food we have ever known to be used at this brief period is rice boiled in milk, for one meal of soft feed daily. Whole wheat thus boiled is also excellent. Potatoes boiled and mashed with either of these grains—say, half-and-half—is best of all.

There are *no* kinds of seed like those of the *sunflower* for giving to the plumage the rich, brilliant gloss that is so attractive and beautiful in the show-pen. Hemp seed and buckwheat will help to effect this; but the sunflower's unctuous composition seems much the best adapted for *this* purpose. But either of these oily seeds should be used with moderation, and but *a little* daily (with their dry grain feed) will be amply sufficient to effect the desired object, without causing a relaxing of the bowels, which trouble, under this high feeding, must always be guarded against with care. Feed meat sparingly.

FINAL PREPARATIONS.

The suggestions thus far offered in this work will apply generally to all kinds of fowls, and more especially to *white* or *light-plumed* birds. The principal object in placing these specimens in clean, dry quarters for a few:

weeks just before show time is that their feathers shall first be purified from stains, or discolorations, and then kept perfectly clean until after exhibiting.

We have known White Leghorn and White Cochin fowls to be disqualified in the pens for showing "foul feathers," of a brownish or dusky hue, in small spots—which alleged false feathers were simply stains on the otherwise fair bodies of the birds, and were washed off after the decisions had been made and the judge had departed—in the presence of the executive committee, to whom the unlucky contributor appealed too late!

All this may be avoided, but it must be carefully attended to, or the delicately white plumage will quickly show the neglect to attend to this simple requirement.

Three days before the show opens in which you at last intend to enter your stock, the light-colored or white fowls may be *washed* all over, to advantage—if the owner knows how to do this. (See page 37 for full description).

HOW TO WIN PRIZES.

First of all, the way to insure the winning of premiums at fowl-shows, is to *deserve the awards*. If the plans we here describe are persistently and faithfully followed out, from inception to conclusion—the man who goes into the shows with such birds as he may in this way rear, *ought* to win.

But this does not always follow! And why?

We will come to that, gentle reader, by and by.

It is all-important that the fancier who aims to win the prizes should contribute first-class samples of the breeds he favors. The birds should be placed on exhibition

in their very best trim in all respects. The *American Standard of Excellence* should be his guide for the production of these birds, and he should breed up as nearly to perfection in symmetry, size, form, color, station and generally requisite points of superiority, as it is possible for him to attain in respect of the varieties he cultivates.

If he will accept our advice, we counsel him not to attempt to do too much. It is by far the better plan—and the chances are vastly in his favor, if he will believe and act upon this hint—that he should breed only one variety, and but a dozen or a score of these that are A 1 birds, than that he should attempt quantity before quality, and so achieve only mediocrity in all.

Breed *good* birds, then, if you can, and exhibit only such. Thus you may earn the coveted prizes.

CAGING FOR THE SHOWS.

The societies provide a uniform style of show-cage, at a nominal rental, for all who desire to be thus accommodated in the exhibition rooms. These cages are light, roomy and comfortable, and are very generally in use at the present day. If a contributor wishes to put into his cages a larger number of birds than these ordinary sized coops are arranged for—a “breeding-pen,” for instance, or otherwise—his own taste will suggest the proper dimensions for this purpose. If cages are painted on the inside—for white-bodied birds a dark green or brown, and for dark-colored birds a pure white are the best tints to serve as a back-ground to “show off” the inmates of the coop to greatest advantage.

TRANSPORTATION TO THE HALLS.

Fowls almost universally are transported to the show-halls by express, over railroads. Largely, as it happens, our exhibitions are held in mid-winter—when the atmosphere is very cold. And here we must suggest caution in the method of shipping, lest the high, thin combs of many varieties—more especially cocks—will be frost-bitten *en route*.

Cover each coop entirely with coarse bagging, or thick cotton canvas, outside. If the fowls are to pass but a single night on the rail, this precaution is indispensable. If the weather is excessively cold, a sheet of coarse brown paper tacked on, *under* the canvas covering, upon three sides of the cage, will answer best as a protection against the insidious assaults of Jack Frost, while the fowls are going to and from the shows, in our bleak winter climate.

IN THE EXHIBITION ROOM.

Go to the shows yourself, or send a trusty man, in company with your stock, if this be convenient. You may confide in the proffered services of managers who offer in their printed schedules to “receive and care for all fowls consigned to their exhibitions in a faithful manner,” etc., if you choose to do so. Many contributors adopt this course—and take their chances. The officials mean well, and they strive to do what they agree to do, usually, in this direction. But——

Well, we recommend every one who enters fine stock at our shows, anywhere, to be on the spot in person when his birds reach the hall. He will then know how well his contribution is cared for, and he (or his imme-

diate representative) may be able to choose a position in the hall more acceptable than *might* be accorded to his cages, were he but a small contributor and absent from the scene. It is fully "one-half the battle," oftentimes, in instances where sharp competition occurs, for the owners of prime fowls to be "around when the ball opens!"

FEEDING THE BIRDS AT SHOWS.

Provision is made by all well-regulated poultry associations to feed, water and care for the stock contributed to their annual exhibitions, while the fowls are confined within their halls. If contributors are content with the bill of fare accorded by ordinary regulations, at such times, it is well. If not—and there are many who prefer to attend to all this themselves—then a card upon your coops requesting the attendants "*not* to feed these birds" will be complied with.

Generally speaking, the poultry have a goodly allowance of food—such as it is. But at very few shows do we meet with any provision by the managers for supplying the birds with gravel and green stuff, while they are cooped up for a week or ten days in a hot room, and then, if ever, *need* these things to assist their digestion of the dry, hard grains they are fed upon continually.

If these are not provided by the society, the humane owners of fowls should see to it, every day, that their pent-up fowls are supplied with cabbage-leaves or turnips, and clean gravel, with a little raw, lean beef in addition to their green feed. These will ward off sickness, in a great measure, and help to keep the birds in good condition for the time being.

JUDGES AT EXHIBITIONS.

These gentlemen have an irksome and disagreeable duty to perform, as a rule; and many of them, though they aim to do their level best in the *role* assigned them, fail to give satisfaction, and as frequently not only disappoint reasonable expectations, but compel the verdict that they are incompetent, prejudiced or partial in their decisions.

Now, this fact is patent, and we trust that no man, or men, will rise up and exclaim, "Is it *I*?" or, "Do you thus allude to *me*, Mr. Author?" because we now speak in very general terms, and intend no *personal* allusions to any one. Nevertheless, there is a *just* line of conduct for these arbiters to pursue; and, beyond this, there are the rights of the whole poultry fraternity involved, which we, as editor, and they, as umpires, are bound in honor to respect.

To illustrate our point, we recur to one instance that chanced to come under our notice at a show, not two years since.

There were on exhibition a few very fine cages of a certain popular variety, with one of the contributors in which class we entered into a brief chat, something in this wise:

"Mr. ———, you have a splendid trio or two of fowls here."

"Yes," he responded, modestly, "they are considered very fine."

"You ought to win with them, clearly. You've surely got the birds?"

"Yes, I reckon I've got the birds," he continued,

dubiously. And pointing to another coop near by, containing palpably inferior samples, he added, "I can't win, though. The other man yonder *has got the judge*, on this breed!"

And so it proved. The "other man" won first and second—as the humbler contributor predicted he would.

Judges are prone to overlook the real merits of certain contributions too often, when the fowls are *not* the property of officials, friends, partisans, or favorites. This is a shame. We speak of it because we are obliged to do so, and should speak of it oftener did we not dread the task so much. Some judges are prejudiced in favor of particular strains of stock that have deservedly won prizes for years. Some incline to favor certain fowls shown because they are known to be entered by some prominent breeder. Some will give the palm to the birds of an associate judge, who enters a variety different from his own birds which *he* contributes in that class, while he is himself the judge upon those entered by his fellow-judge. This is facetiously called the "You-tickle-me-and-I'll-tickle-you" system of "judging!"

There are other modes of beating the innocent and unpretending (but oftentimes meritorious) contributor, that are even less honorable and less equitable than are those we have mentioned. But we have not the appetite, even if we had the space, to pursue this theme now. We have but briefly referred to the wrong considered, with a view to put judges upon their guard against these unrighteous usages, and at the same time to inform the uninitiated what they may be called upon, perhaps, to contend with, from time to time.

The evils mentioned will correct themselves, no doubt, eventually. And, meanwhile, lesser contributors at the shows should "keep their eyes open," and continue to "put their best foot foremost," every time, in their efforts to win through indisputable merit. The day will come when all these abuses will be "played out." And the sooner this time arrives, the better will it be for all concerned.

AFTER THE EXHIBITION.

When all is over, and the lucky and unlucky competitors have learned the fate of their contributions, for the time being, let it not be forgotten that the fowls have been shut up in a hot hall for a number of days—or a week, it may be—and that they are now to be brought forth into the frigid night air, to be transported back to their owners' premises, perhaps with the thermometer ranging at, or several degrees below, zero.

This is a trying ordeal for any kind of fowls, and especially is it hazardous to the future well-being of the Leghorns, the Black Spanish, the Dorkings, the single-combed Cochins, the Plymouth Rocks, etc. If they have escaped freezing their combs during the first journey, now is the time to look out for the second period of jeopardy.

Cover the cages up carefully with the canvas or matting, as in the first instance, and get them all home into their comfortable quarters at the earliest hour possible after the show closes. Release them upon the earthy floor and watch what follows. Note how earnestly they go to burrowing in the sand. How busy they are in

picking out the gritty substances they find around them, and how eagerly they gulp down the particles of shell, flint and granite that they have been deprived of so long!

Feed them wisely now for a month at the least. If they are to be carried away in a week or two to some other distant exhibition—as winners usually are—the nicest care must be taken of them in the interim between the shows. If not, put the hens on a low diet for thirty days, commencing with their first feed after returning to their quarters.

Cooked bran and turnips mashed, for a morning feed, and oats and barley *only*, for dry food, for the following month. The fatty, meaty tissue you have forced upon them, in their prior five or six weeks extra feeding, must be reduced directly, or you get no eggs from them fit to set or for hatching, remember. And if these winners or show fowls are your *breeders*, they are in very poor plight (in this artificial condition) upon returning from the shows to furnish you with eggs suitable for incubating purposes.

RESTORATION AT LAST.

With all your efforts for their comfort and benefit, fowls that are exposed to the extremes of heat and cold in the halls and while upon the way, to and fro, will get ill, more or less. If they escape an attack of roup, diarrhœa, or canker—most common ails at such times among high-fed fowls—they will frequently exhibit lassitude, loss of appetite, effects of cold in the head or limbs, or other temporary troubles that call for careful treatment.

Into the drink supplied them now drop a pinch of ground ginger or cayenne pepper daily. Or, every other day, alternate these with a few drops of tincture of iron. Feed with their hot bran-mash a little "Egg-Food" twice a week—an excellent alternative—for a while.

Keep them in the sunshine now. Give them daily ventilation of their houses. Scatter fresh hay, cut short, around the floor for them to peck at. They will eat this eagerly. Chop up *cooked* meat and boiled fish occasionally to regale them with. But all the time *feed lightly*, until they come up well into their former natural, healthy, thrifty condition.

By the first of March all will be well again. Keep up the early matings. The hens will begin to lay more vigorously by this time. The eggs will be fertile.

As the days begin to lengthen,
And the warmth begins to strengthen,

the peep of the "coming winners" for another season may be heard from beneath the motherly sitter's wings, who has been busy for one-and-twenty days in her early spring duty.

Treat *these* new-comers as we have advised you to treat the last year's birds, now grown to maturity. If the latter have won the prizes you went for at the recent season's shows, you are lucky, and will find yourself rewarded for the pains dutifully and wisely taken to produce such superior stock.

If *not*—and you return home disappointed at being beaten by John, Thomas or William, on *this* occasion—then "up and at them *again!*" the coming year.

PARTRIDGE COCHINS.

The successful breeding of Partridge Cochins is certainly something very desirable to be attained. It does not require much thought on the part of the breeder who desires only large birds, to produce such, provided he secures his breeding stock from some of the well-known breeders (that produce large fowls without regard to matings). For such matings we should select large and good Cochin-shaped hens, which, placed with a cock with equally good Cochin shape, will produce all that we desire. But the poultry fancier of today, who has turned his attention to the beautiful Partridge Cochins, is not satisfied with the above result, and is aiming to show his brother fancier the modern Partridge Cochin that attracts so much attention in the show-room. To breed any variety to feather is a very great and difficult undertaking, and, if attained, will be the result of many years of careful study and watchfulness. We often see a breeder exhibit one very fine specimen, or perhaps a pair or trio of fine birds; but, after close questioning, we find that they were not his own breeding, but have been purchased from some celebrated fancier of long experience. We at once turn our attention from the exhibitor to the breeder who has shown such good judgment in his matings. The breeder that commands our respect is the man who can show us (as we visit his yards) a fine flock of both cockerels and pullets, *the get of the cock* that has been selected with great care. Partridge Cochins, by nearly all breeders, are considered the most difficult of all the parti-colored breeds to bring to the recognized show standard. This may be traced to the fact that the early Partridge

Cochin cocks were undoubtedly brown-breasted. The means of overcoming the great difficulty of breeding these beauties appear to be understood by some of our fanciers, but the great mass of breeders are wholly at a loss to know how to mate to produce the desired results, which are finely-colored cockerels and neatly-penciled pullets. To obtain the best results with this variety there must be two matings: one to produce males, and a different one for females, that will be approved by the present *Standard*. Many fanciers are not yet ready to admit this; but to our mind the following rules will hold good, if we really wish to obtain fine exhibition birds: if we desire to perfect a fine strain of cockerels, we should look first to the breeding-cock, and see that he possesses all the required Cochin characteristics—such as good symmetry; small and evenly-serrated comb; broad and beautiful saddle; fluff very full and abundant; wings that are well tucked up; tail carried very low (soft and free from any quill-feathers, if a possible thing); shanks and feet to be well feathered, and we must not for a moment overlook the middle toe, which must also be well feathered.

When we are fully assured that we have all of the above points, we must turn our attention to the color of the bird. Must have the breast, fluff and leg-feathering all solid black; the hackle should be a fine orange-red, and toward the front should be very dark; the saddle should be very much the same color; the stripe of both hackle and saddle feathers should be a jet black. The females for this yard should have small heads; combs that are small and fine; hackle to be a *rich* orange; ground-color to be a dark, handsome brown. A broad

and ample cushion is most to be desired, the penciling being a deeper brown, to be very fine, and to nearly cover the ground-color upon the breast and flat of the wings. The secondary quills will be very black; and it is well that the cushion be so dark as to be hardly distinguishable from black. White in the cock's tail or wings, or even in the feet feathering, must not be used in a yard for cockerels; nor should we use a cock with any white in our pullet yards. It will be necessary, in breeding pullets, to have quite a different type of bird—the cock for this pen should, of course, have the same Cochín characteristics as to symmetry, etc., as the yard for cockerels. We do not care to see fluff and breast a solid black, but rather prefer to have a good proportion of brown or red—think when the feathers are laced with red, it is much better than to have the whole feather of a solid brown or red—the hackle and saddle to be a bright, handsome orange (but not so dark as for cockerels), the dark red being a great objection in pullets as breeders. The females for this pen should have bright orange-colored *heads* and hackles, the dark color running well up upon the head; the hackles may vary somewhat. If she be an exhibition bird, it should be striped with solid black; but for a breeder it will not matter if it be quite well penciled; the ground-color of the body must be a handsome shade of light brown, or approaching a little toward the buff; the center of the breast and flat of the wing must be very accurately penciled with perfect semicircles so dark in color as to be discernible when standing some distance from the bird; the back should be well penciled, but we do not expect to find that even

penciling that we get upon the breast—the cushion to be well penciled, so as to nearly cover the ground-color; short secondary quill also to be well penciled. A pullet that is not penciled well up under the throat must not be expected to produce those that are. If we have the dark penciling and the handsome body-color that we have mentioned, such a mating can not fail to bring us good birds.

BUFF COCHINS.

have not gained in popularity in this country as rapidly as the variety of the Cochin group previously described. Yet, when well bred, their rich buff plumage is pleasing, if not so attractive as that of the Partridge Cochins.

The difficulties to be overcome in breeding are pale or faded feathers, white tail and depreciation in weight. A small, slender, weakly Cochin is an object not attractive, even if the plumage is unexceptionable.

We desire a full cushion, covering the tail almost completely, an abundant fluff, and legs standing well apart, as if sustaining great weight. They should look ponderous, if this expression is allowable in speaking of birds.

In mating, only specimens of good size should be used. The cock should have a full and rather dark buff color, especially on the tail and wings, and from the middle of the back, toward the tail, the body should be wide, carrying a very heavy saddle, and rising full-feathered and dome-like to the stern; tail-coverts chestnut, and the tail preferably a very dark chestnut. Thighs should be stout and well covered with rich buff color, extending in soft plumage down the outside of the shank and covering

the outside and middle toes. The saddle and lower part of hackle should have long-pointed, abundant plumage, with full buff color; and it should be borne in mind that any mealy appearance in the wings is very objectionable.

The breeding hens for such a cock should have rather small heads, combs and wattles, short necks, rich buff color; and for the rest, we should use the term *fullness*, in speaking of cushion, fluff and all the apparent plumage, not forgetting the full fledging of legs on outside and the middle toe. We need only to see a hint as to the whereabouts of the tail.

It is not wise to use a Buff Cochins, of either sex, as breeder, that is faded in appearance. Such birds should be rejected without hesitation. A cock with black plumage in tail and wings, mated with standard hens, may produce valuable pullets. The objects in every mating should be to sustain color and size. In order to accomplish our purpose, the breeding stock should be two years old, and have held well to color—being well developed, yet not allowed to get over-fat. Such stock will produce chicks that will have better constitutions and attain a larger growth than those produced from younger birds. This remark is a trite one, applicable to all varieties of poultry.

WHITE COCHINS.

For many years this beautiful variety of Cochins, among the American fanciers, has been somewhat neglected. We suppose for no other reason than that the great care necessary for their fine appearance has, in the minds of

many, been the means of turning their attention toward the other varieties of this class. Owing a great deal to location, and in many cases to the soil in certain localities, the number of persons that can breed any variety of white fowls with success must be limited. Were not this the case, no variety of the Asiatics would have more enthusiastic admirers than the White Cochins. For many years we did not see the cocks showing that fine symmetry and beautiful carriage that is peculiar to the Buff and Partridge varieties, and in many yards they fell much below the Buff and Partridge in weight. Though we have often seen these objectionable points in the cocks, the females many times will surpass the other varieties in the beautiful points of cushion, fluff and feather. During the exhibition seasons of 1874-5-6-7-8-9 we have seen a very marked improvement in the number of Whites exhibited; not only have they been out in larger numbers, but the quality of the birds has been much superior to the former exhibitions. We feel that this is owing very largely to the efforts of a few of our leading fanciers of this variety, who have done so much to bring them to the point they so richly deserved in the show-room.

The large exhibits of Mr. W. T. Fenton, of Indianapolis, Ind., at the exhibitions of the Indiana State Society—also at the La Fayette Exhibition, and at the National Exhibition, held at Chicago, 1878—were very much admired by fanciers from all parts of the country, and we believe the gentleman has well earned the title of “White Cochin King of America.” The cock Henry (3833), exhibited for several seasons past by Mr. Fenton,

has been pronounced by many of the best judges of this variety to be the best White Cochín cock ever exhibited in this country. We do not suppose there is a Cochín of any of the varieties that has taken so many premiums as this bird. While owned in Connecticut and exhibited by Mr. Geo. W. Mitchell, of Bristol, he was the first-premium bird at the Massachusetts State Show held at Boston, January, 1877; Central Connecticut, held at Bristol, December, 1876; Great Consolidated Exhibition of the New England Societies, held at Springfield, Mass., February, 1876; Western Massachusetts, held at Northampton, January, 1876. He was also the first-premium bird at the Connecticut State Show held at Hartford, January, 1878. Together with Mr. Fenton, we find J. J. Berry, of Hackensack, N. J.; M. I. Ellis, Norwood, Mass.; G. W. Mitchell, of Bristol, Conn., all of whom have done a great deal toward improving this beautiful variety.

For real beauty of plumage, there are but very few of the standard varieties of fowls that equal the Whites; and on a spring or summer day, as we look out upon a fine grass-run, there is nothing more gratifying than to see a fine flock of this variety. They at once strike the eye as beauties, and we often wonder why people that have fine village homes with beautiful grass lawns do not breed them simply as an ornament; for as the stranger, and even the neighbor, passes, they would be the one thing to be admired. Aside from the pure white plumage, there are many other points which this breed should possess. In these days of fine fowls we must have all the Cochín characteristics in this variety, as well as in the Buffs and Partridge. Clear white plumage is the

great thing to be aimed at; but young breeders will be very much disappointed in their young stock, if they do not study well the balance of the fine points required by the *Standard*. In choosing our breeding-cock, we must look well to the pure white plumage mentioned, for in visiting the different yards we will find that there are several shades of White in Cochins, and we must always be on the lookout to select the richest white; and should we desire to purchase old birds, we must see that they have retained the pure white after they have moulted, for we often find many cocks that will moult yellow on the back and wings. This is sometimes seen in the cockerels, and such birds should be at once cast to one side. Birds, either old or young, that are found marked with yellow in the hackle, share the same fate. After we have found the color desired, we must look well to the symmetry and general carriage of the cock. The head should be small, for so large a bird, and very fine; comb, small and perfectly straight and upright, firm on the head and well and evenly serrated; beak, short and stout and bright yellow in color; good, rich, flowing hackle; short, broad back, with a gentle rise from the middle thereof to the tail, and with saddle-feathers very abundant; breast and body, deep, broad and full; wings should be small, and well folded under the secondaries, so as to entirely cover the wings when closed; tail, broad and soft, and carried very low; shanks that are stout, short, yellow in color and wide apart, heavily feathered, and the middle toe also to be well feathered.

The hens and pullets are not so liable to be yellow about the back and wings, but still it will be found in

many yards that the color of plumage is not as would be desired for breeding. Always select such as are pure white, or your labor will be as good as lost, should you expect to get fine exhibition specimens from such yards.

Breeding-hens should be large in frame, the head should be small and neat; beak, short, stout, and rich yellow in color; comb, small and fine, with small and well-defined serrations; neck, short, the hackle-feathers reaching well over the shoulders; back, broad and the cushion rising from the middle thereof and partially covering the tail; breast, broad and carried rather low; body, broad, round and deep; wings, small and the primaries well folded under, the points well covered by the fluff; fluff, very abundant and soft, giving the bird a very deep appearance; legs and feet to be well feathered, same as the male bird.

In breeding fine exhibition birds it is always desirable to breed from birds that have moulted once; but if obliged to breed from cockerels, they should always be mated with old hens, and if we desire to use the pullets for breeders, they should be placed with yearling cocks. After writing on the subject of mating and rearing White Cochins, it seems very suitable to mention the methods and precautions necessary in the immediate preparation for the show-room. The remarks are applicable, not only to White Cochins, but to all other light-colored varieties. Indeed, birds of any color are all the better in appearance for being *clean*. Some soils give to white plumage a red tinge, somewhat the nature of a lye; but generally, soap and water will effect a cleansing. At this stage of our work we desire health and cleanliness.

The little white chicks are very beautiful, and are very much admired as they grow into larger birds and as the time approaches for the last moult of the season. The next object will be to keep them a pure, rich white; and in order to do this, they must be kept from the sun as much as possible. They should be placed in well-shaded runs, or given proper shelter of some kind. If not able to give them such runs as are desirable, the cock-birds should be driven into the fowl-house during the time the sun shines hottest, and it will be found that the fine white plumage will be very much better on birds that are so treated. At about this age of the chicks we find that the exhibition season is fast approaching and particular attention must be given to the feeding. Birds that have been penned up will need great care that they do not receive over-feed; it is always better to have a little appetite to spare. All the flesh that can be put upon a bird is not what is desired. We have known many fine fat Cochins that did not win in the show-room, simply for the reason that the competing birds, though smaller, were much better in condition of plumage. For several weeks previous to the exhibitions, soft food should be given for breakfast, also a little of the same at noon; a little chopped meat (cooked) should be given daily. Several times during the week a little linseed should be stewed and added to the soft food. A little hempseed given with the evening meal will also help to add luster to the plumage. Sulphate of iron should be given in the drinking-water, which will bring out nicely the red in the comb and wattles. Should not use the sulphate oftener than every other day. As far

as feeding is concerned, nothing more will be required, aside from the evening feed of grain and the green food that should be given every day. Rice, boiled in milk, given several times during the week previous to an exhibition, will do much to prevent purging.

After giving the birds the very best of care, they will not win with close competition if the plumage is not perfectly free from dirt, which should never be allowed upon any exhibition bird with which we expect to win.

The success of many of our noted fanciers has depended largely upon the excellent washing that their birds have received. We remember well hearing one noted breeder of Whites remark that he felt almost sure to win with them when in fine condition of plumage; and this confidence was obtained by first giving perfect attention to feeding and always washing the exhibition birds before each show. The washing should always be done from twelve to twenty-four hours before shipping the birds. Take an ordinary wash-tub that is large enough to take in the cock-birds without injury to the tail and that will give plenty of room for work. Fill the tub with warm water (not hot) so that the bird, when placed in the tub, will be covered on the back and well up on to the neck. Use pure white soap and rub in the water until you have a good suds. Then rub the bird well with the soap on all the dirty parts, which you will see very plainly when the bird is wet. Rub the feathers hard, as it will do them no harm as long as you do not rub hard enough to break them. After having cleaned the back and wings well, rub the

hand among the fluff and breast feathers. Do not try any half-way washing. Be sure that the bird is put well under the water, leaving only the head out. Have no fear for the tail or any part of the feathers, for they will all come right. Before the washing, provide a second tub, filled with clear, *cold* water, so that the bird will be covered same as in the tub of warm water. Do not be afraid of the cold water, for they will not take cold, as the cold water closes all of the pores of the body. When the bird is quite clean, place in the tub of cold water and rinse thoroughly, until you are sure the soap is all out of the feathers. With this part of the work great care must be taken; for if the soap is not all out, the feathers will not rub well.

After rinsing thoroughly, let them stand to drain awhile, then place in a coop and put them in a warm room to dry. It is well to place several birds in one coop, as the steam from the birds helps to keep warm. Do not place too near the stove, as they will blister their combs, after having been in the water; place them from two and one-half to four feet from the stove, according to the heat. In about one hour after washing, you will notice the feathers about the head have begun to web, and then the hackle-feathers will follow quickly. When birds are to be shipped the following day, we should recommend washing immediately after dinner, then the birds will be ready for the early morning trains. When you go out in the morning to look at your pets, the fine Cochin of yesterday will be almost a stranger to you, having improved so much in washing; and when the awards of the exhibition are made known, you will feel

more than repaid for your trouble. After reaching the exhibition, should you find any combs that are dull in color, give them a good rubbing with brandy, and the bright red will return again. Do not use vinegar, as the combs will turn dull again very soon. Should birds appear a little dumpish after washing, give one or two pepper-corns.

BLACK COCHINS.

are another of the self-colored varieties. Most of those at the present time grown in this country are faulty in plumage in considerable degree. It is a rare thing to meet with a brood of chickens of this breed that grow to maturity (especially the cockerels), that do not show patches or streaks of red or brassy feathers in hackles on saddles or wings.

This is a serious blemish; but it has been found very difficult—and in some strains impossible—to breed this imperfect color out of certain birds chosen for their good points otherwise. The *Standard* provides that the hackles should be “free from golden or reddish feathers,” as also the back and wings. But the presence of these colors among the general black plumage is *not* set down as a disqualification.

To breed this variety at its best the clearest “metallic-black” fowls, of either sex, alone should be mated together. The less of golden and red feathers to be seen upon this fowl in the show-pens, the higher the scoring of such samples may be looked for among good judges of Black Cochins.

The same general directions in regard to size, build

and symmetry applicable to breeding stock of the other Cochins varieties will apply to the one now under consideration.

There is a *new* breed introduced into America, within the last two or three years, called the *Langshan* fowl—which derives its name from the province of Langshan, China, whence it comes into England, and thence into this country—which closely resembles the best Black Cochins we have here already, but which is a distinct species, or variety by itself, there is no doubt. But as the *Langshan* is a Chinese fowl, and as this breed has attained a most enviable notoriety in England and France within the past five years, we mention it here because of its close similarity to the Black Cochins in several of its leading features.

There are as yet but few Langshans in the United States, however; and this variety is not as yet recognized in the *American Standard* at all. So we merely mention it now; and with the brief assertion that those we have examined of this stock are very nicely plumed, clear-black birds throughout, of good size and proportions, and that they breed most accurately, so far as we have seen the young ones grown from the originals. We pass on to other topics, merely remarking that evidently the same rules, as regards plumage, will apply to them as to the Black Cochins.

LIGHT BRAHMAS.

In breeding this variety, or any other parti-colored fowl, it is the extreme of the two styles of feathering, dark or light, which must be brought appropriately in

combination to produce the average happy medium in color of cocks and pullets among the succeeding chicks. This is what is meant by proper and judicious *mating*

If the Light Brahma cock or cockerel chosen as a breeder be a clear, white-bodied bird, for instance, with a full, well-defined *dark* hackle, black wing-flights and black tail, such a sire should be placed in connection with hens that are equally clean in body-color, but whose neck-hackles, wing-tips and tails are much *lighter* in the marking or penciling. And if the hens to be bred from are all *dark* hackled, and similarly on wings and tail, then the cock mated to them should wear the *light-feathered* hackle and the extreme white body-color, to be most appropriate to such hens.

It is time thrown away to attempt to breed even-colored and finely-penciled Light Brahma chickens from any other combination than that now described. Even by this method of mating *all* the chicks will not be so uniformly marked as we should like to have them. But through this means a majority of the chicks will be well marked, of both sexes; and the "culls" to be thrown aside on account of imperfect color, will be much less in numbers than results from the adoption of any other course within our experience.

In any case, the *sire's* appears to be the preponderating influence in breeding this variety. A well-formed, well-penciled, well-colored cock will impress his chief characteristics upon his progeny to a very large extent, whatever may be the character of the hens with which he may habitually consort. But for close, clean breeding, and for the reproduction of the highest quality in these

birds, the mothers should also possess well-defined and positive qualities of superiority as well.

The *time* to mate these fowls, with a view to attaining the better results, is in late winter—say, in January. The best *age* at which the sexes should be thus mated is when the pullets to be bred from are nine to ten months old, and these will turn out more satisfactorily if coupled with a two-year-old cock. If old hens are used, as before remarked in speaking of other breeds, a vigorous yearling cockerel will serve them advantageously, and the union should be made permanently in December, if convenient.

When your fowls are so selected and placed together in the breeding-runs, do not disturb the arrangements thus made, if you desire to succeed according to your best ambition. Changing the cocks from one pen of hens to another is not a wise method. If they are kept constantly together, in quiet, without introducing among them strange birds of either sex during the whole breeding season, they will do vastly better, and their eggs will hatch with much greater uniformity than they will when shifted about or experimented with in any way.

Eight or ten hens or pullets to one male Light Brahma will generally be found sufficient for the best results, yet the number varies with different cocks. If only a trio of hens are used, the majority of the chicks first hatched will prove to be male birds, as a rule. The larger the number of hens a cock associates with—within ordinary limits—the more pullet chickens are raised from their eggs, so far as we have observed, among the Asiatic varieties.

DARK BRAHMAS.

The mating of this breed is a nice operation, to produce exactly what is now aimed at by experienced fanciers. The *Standard of Excellence* provides that Dark Brahmas shall be "disqualified" by judges in the exhibition-pens, if they possess any of the following palpable defects, namely: Birds that do not match in the show-pen; those having a comb falling over, on either side; having crooked backs; wry-tails; twisted wing-feathers; legs not feathered outside the shanks, and to the extremities of the outer toes; vulture-hocks, etc. All these are absolute disqualifications.

Now, of the many average "good Dark Brahmas" which are carefully bred in the United States, from what is deemed reliably known stock, there are very few birds—more especially among the *cocks* shown for premiums—that are not blemished by some one or more of the above-designated defects. It is next to impossible to produce these birds completely free from some of these imperfections.

Still, it *is* accomplished, now and then. And the breeders we have referred to have been fortunate, frequently in placing in their show-coops, at our poultry exhibitions, superior specimens, that have deservedly proved winners, in the past seven years.

The pure steel-gray color in the *hens* of this class, entirely free from the brownish cast of plumage that crops out in the English-bred birds (imported into America since 1866-7), is the *true* color to be aimed for, in the genuine Dark Brahma. And the solid black-breasted *cock*, devoid of any brown or brassy feathers in saddle, hackles

or wing-coverts, is the ever-desirable thing for male birds of this species.

True it is, as we are well informed, that our *Standard* does not fix upon a discoloration of plumage the stigma of disqualification, explicitly. Yet in the enumeration or description of the requisite feathering of these birds, that *Standard* tells us that the different parts of their plumage shall be "black and silvery-white;" "black with an edging of white;" or "of a metallic or greenish-black, fringed at the edge with white," etc. No mention in the *Standard* is made of the *brown* feathers so often seen upon the bodies of hens and upon the rear flanks of cocks, which might well be pronounced a disqualification—in our mature judgment!

And wherefore?

Because the original "*Dark* Brahma" fowl—so named by Mr. Tegetmeier, high English authority—had no *brown* feathers in its composition; and the first that was ever seen of this blemish among the steel-gray feathering was found upon the early importations from England, after 1866, when the British fanciers had had time to introduce a cross of the Partridge Cochin upon those first sent out there from this country, for the purpose, as they have since admitted, of increasing their *size*.

But American breeders still cling to their "first love," in this respect. And it is the pride of our best fanciers to produce the "clear silver-gray" hen and the "solid black-breasted cock," in *Dark* Brahmas—which we deem a very laudable and sensible conviction on their part.

Another excrescence upon the English birds of this class, which is seen almost universally upon the first

year's product in this country after importing a trio, is the "vulture hock." This is properly declared in the *American Standard* a disqualification in the show-room. And both this and the mixture of brown feathering upon the hens' bodies and in the cocks' wings, to which we have now referred, should be strenuously avoided in our attempts at breeding prize Dark Brahma fowls.

To succeed in producing birds of this variety that are pretty sure to win at our exhibitions, we must begin with the cleanest stock-fowls that can be obtained. Such as are free from the stain of *brown* feathering in both cock and pullet, and such as also show no vestige of the "vulture-hock" upon their shanks, *only* should be selected for breeders. Any others are useless to risk for the raising of *show* birds.

The lighter the general hue of the plumage may be, if evenly penciled, upon the Dark Brahma hens or pullets, so that it does not merge into speckled or spotted gray, the better, usually, and the safer. Any shade or indication of bay or brownish plumage—however faint or indistinct—should cause such hen or pullet to be discarded at once and for ever, as a breeder.

As in the female, so in the sire. If the Dark Brahma cock shows the slightest traces of brown, red or "brassy" feathering across his wings, set him aside, as a *breeder*. You do not want him; and you can do better in your selection of a male bird. He should be clear, solid black-breasted, and black-flanked also. If the black, fluffy portion of the thighs are mottled with brown spotting, discard him, or the pullets coming after him will surely be brown-backed, seven out of every ten of them.

As to "penciling" or marking on the hens of this variety, there is a choice in every flock; although, as a rule, they will breed pretty accurately, so far as this feather-marking is concerned. A little careful observation in this direction will soon teach the breeder what is most desirable. The *Standard* requires the head of the Dark Brahma hen to be broad and neatly formed, beak horn-color; comb "pea" and small; neck-hackles silvery-white with each feather clearly striped with black, falling well down upon the shoulders. The cock should be "black on breast, or slightly mottled with white,"—says the *Standard* (not brown), and to this allowance we do not object, though we consider "solid black" preferable—and upon any other portion of the plumage only "silvery-white," or "dead black" is permissible.

To reproduce these colors in Dark Brahmas, we must discard all *others* mentioned. Choose, then, your sire and dam of the steel-gray and pronounced black and white plumage only. Treat the chicks as we have recommended the Light Brahmas to be treated. Select the choicest in size, color and form that you may find in your flocks, at three to four months old; cull out the imperfect ones—the deformed, the wry-tailed, the brown-stained, the false-combed, the knock-kneed, the vulture-hocked and the twisted-winged—of which, do your best, you will every season find more or less in some way defective—and put the rest upon their extra rations for the succeeding winter's show-pens.

And among the latter, if well tended and cared for, as we have suggested, you may have winners—or our advice as to their proper breeding is erroneous.

PLYMOUTH ROCKS.

In every yard of Plymouth Rocks the fowls are found varying in color, both cocks and hens. Among the former a very few are what would be called dark, a considerable number medium, and a large number light, or very light, so that they may be called light, as a rule. The hens are in greatly preponderating numbers, very dark, a few lighter, and a *very* few what might be called light, or about the same shade as a dark medium cockerel.

These light pullets and dark medium cockerels match in the pen, and from them are selected the exhibition birds. They are desirable, but few; being few, they are in great demand. Breeders wish to mate their stock in such manner as to produce the greatest number of these light-colored pullets.

Now, if a certain shade of color could be obtained by mating black with white, in fixed proportions, as the painter would mix pigments when making a paint to represent sky or clouds, there would be no difficulty. *The Standard of Excellence* calls for bluish-gray as the general color in both sexes of this breed. There appears three reversionary forces, all operating strongly to prevent uniformity in color: first, the ancestral black hen, on that side of the house—she stands braced back, and pulling with all might and main to make her descendants black or dark in plumage and with dark legs. People talk about different origins of this breed; no matter, it seems plain that a thoroughbred black hen is back of the breed, with a line stretching all the way down, and she controls the feathers of the pullets. She has yielded very much—has made a compromise with the Dominique male pro-

genitor in regard to color—yet she holds on to this reversionary influence strongly.

Next is the Dominique cock—the first cross. We can imagine him, a light-colored bird, braced back and pulling on the line of descent to make his cockerel descendants light colored, like himself. We can not find that he has changed in color a particle by the union. He was light colored when he commenced, and he is light colored now. He has only changed in size, shape and comb. The reason of this may be that male stock getters of light color have been generally used. Whereas, on the other side, all the black pullets have been thrown out, and the darkest pullets have not been used as breeders. Every year that our light cockerels are used in succession tends to *fix* the breed light on this side. Every year in which the lightest-colored pullets are used successively tends to *fix* a lighter shade on the female side. The light-colored cockerel and the black hen draw in opposite directions. Why can not the Plymouth Rocks be so changed by breeding as to approximate, and finally draw together?

This can only be accomplished by patience and effort in the right direction. It never will be done by persistently always using a light cock.

The change must be gradual. It will be advisable for the breeder to make three matings. In the first place, all the lightest cockerels and all the darkest pullets should be rejected as unfit to breed. Then much attention should be given to the color of legs. It is very important that a breeding cockerel should have not only legs yellow, but *very* yellow legs. The pullets at first can not be found in considerable numbers with pure yellow legs, but

After culling out all that show glaring imperfections, and those very light or very dark, take of the remainder those pullets that are the darkest and mate them with one of the lightest cockerels not near akin. This mating will not produce exhibition cockerels, and the majority of the pullets will be about the color of the dams—the lightest will be useful.

Then take those pullets a few shades lighter than those of the first mating and mate them with a medium colored cockerel. This mating will produce a good per cent. of standard chicks, more especially cockerels.

Lastly, place the lightest-colored pullets with a dark medium cockerel. In this mating the sexes are nearly of one color. Every breeder should make such a mating as this every year. We have conversed with several breeders who have made this practice without getting black chicks, and we think it is only by this system of mating that this breed may be rendered uniform in color. The mating of extreme colors should be discontinued entirely as soon as may be, and the breeder should have in view the bringing about a uniformity of color in the sexes.

There is another reversionary tendency, to which we have hinted, a tinge or color of brass and brown feathers. If a flock of Plymouth Rocks are permitted to breed indiscriminately, they will nearly all be affected by this impurity of plumage in a few years. The brassy and brown colors seem to come in easily, and it is only by selection that they may be kept out.

We are waiting for the coming Plymouth Rock cock, with dark medium plumage, distinctly marked, that shall have prepotency to stamp his color on his chicks,

especially of his own sex; a "Duke of York" that shall found a strain and crowd the light cockerels off the track. If the sexes are ever to breed uniform in color, it will undoubtedly be owing to some such extraordinary specimen of either sex. Some one may say, we must follow nature, Plymouth Rock cocks are naturally light. True, but nature sometimes appears to make a new departure in this business. A great many curious things have been done with feathers. Witness, also, the changes that have been already produced in our domestic poultry. And can we not vary the color of the Plymouth Rock cock? Mr. Darwin says: "When man is the selecting agent, we clearly see that the two elements of change (man and nature) are distinct; variability is in some manner excited, but it is the will of man which accumulates the variations in certain directions."

Aside from plumage, the symmetry, size, breast and body are made prominent in the *Standard of Excellence*. Symmetry is the fit proportion of parts. A Dorking may be symmetrical, also a Cochin, yet the two differ very materially in shape. Twelve points are assigned to symmetry in Plymouth Rocks. This is not for a Dorking shape or a Cochin shape, but a well-proportioned Plymouth Rock. Every year people are learning the distinctive shape of this breed. The chromos and engravings made to represent specimens help to fix true ideas of their shape or proper symmetry. It is not easy to write a description of the symmetry of this breed. One can better learn this at exhibitions, where the best specimens may be seen. It would be very bad policy to breed from a cock having a very long neck and short legs, or

having legs very long and standing near together. The comb is very liable to be crooked, carried too far back, pimply, or irregular in its serrations. A small comb, thick at the base, is apt to be free from faults, while a large comb is generally uneven, lopped, or has kinks and sprigs. These sprigs are only the reversion toward the rose-comb of the Dominique ancestry.

SILVER SPANGLED HAMBURGS.

All the varieties of Hamburgs, being rather small, and active in their habits, need considerable room for exercise; in fact a small breed of fowls need a larger space and better opportunity for exercise than those of larger size and slower movement. Lively birds do not stand close confinement well—pinning, or, at least, showing the ill effect in general health. A large run may be desirable for any breed, but it is especially necessary for Hamburgs, if they are to show their very best condition.

If we select breeding stock, we want the birds in the very healthiest condition at the time of laying eggs. Such beautiful fowls, such fine layers, should not be stived up in very small quarters and suffer from neglect of cleanliness, a poor ventilation or none; for although they are delicate and beautiful, they are not proof against those ills that neglected fowls become heir to.

We will first mention some distinct parts or qualities that are common to the six varieties, and should be as nearly perfect as possible in every specimen, male or female, used for breeding.

All Hamburgs have rose-combs; and as this feature is prominent, those who are beginning to breed them should

have a clear idea of what a good rose-comb is, that they may not, in selecting breeders, unwittingly cultivate what would depreciate the value of their stock as breeders or show-birds.

It should be square in front, not bowing or irregular, neither jutting over the eyes. The proper color is bright red, as this indicates health and a rich, lively blood; and it should be firm, not slouching to one side, and it should be even, the points of equal height, with no depression in the middle. From the part directly above the eyes it should narrow back, terminating in a spike, only slightly inclined upward.

This description may answer for the combs of hens, except as they are comparatively small.

The ear-lobes of both sexes and all six varieties should be white, not semi-transparent, not hanging loosely, but fitting closely, and with the lower part nicely rounded; not large—the ear-lobes of the hens small. The wattles should not present a heavy appearance, but should be thin and handsomely rounded.

The form of our breeding-cock should be peculiarly graceful, with full breast, tapering neck carried well back, and having a flowing hackle, abundant tail-coverts and long, splendidly curved sickles.

Speaking now more particularly of the Silver Spangled variety, in selecting breeding-stock there should be careful attention given to the ground color, which should be pure white, free from yellow tinge or mossier. This pure silvery white should appear in all parts of the neck, breast and body.

And now for the ornamental markings of the cock.

The lower hackle-feathers and those of the saddle should both end with a black spangle, not necessarily sharply defined, but somewhat rayed in appearance; the plumage of the back, also, should have spangles of black on the end of each feather. These spangles are more apparent when feathers are examined separately, and the more firmly feathers are in their places, the better. Feathers loosely set on do not show the starry or rayed spangles to advantage. The feathers of the breast and body should each end with a large moon or spangle, round, greenish-black in color, sharply defined and separate to appearance. When the feathers on the breast do not hold their proper places, or when the spangles are oblong, they join each other in patches of black, thus injuring the appearance of the cock very materially. Aside from the symmetry of the bird, everything depends on the well-defined spangles in these parts, each feather firmly in its place. All the wing-feathers should end with a black spangle, those of the secondaries half-moon shape. The full-moon spangles of the wing-coverts are very important, as when in perfection of form and arrangement they present two distinct *bars* of greenish-black very pleasing to the eye. The tail-feathers on the outside, coming in view, pure white, with bold, large, well-defined greenish-black spangles at the tips; tail-coverts same, and sickles long, pure white and nicely curved, and with a black spangle at the tip.

A cock of this description, or as near to it as may be, matched with standard hens, is the best we can do in the way of mating. One cock may prove himself remarkable in producing finely-marked cockerels; another

may get valuable pullets. Such peculiarities, though they may be unaccountable, should be noted, and the same fowls used for breeding the succeeding year with the same mating. After the first annual moulting, the ground-color of this variety is very liable to become more or less tinged with yellow, but no bird should be used for breeding that is not well spangled in all parts, not excepting thighs and fluff. Legs, slate-blue, according to *Standard*.

GOLDEN SPANGLED HAMBURGS.

The Golden Spangled breeding-cock should have a hackle golden-bay, with a black stripe down the middle of each feather; back dark bay, each feather tipped with a black starry spangle; the color of the breast and body rich bay, each feather having a black, round spangle at the tip, said spangles not to overlap each other, but distinct, and showing the bay color between and without white edging; the wing-bow very dark bay, each feather with black spangle; wing-coverts with black spangles at the end of each feather, forming two regular and beautiful bars; primaries and secondaries, inner-webs black, outer-webs bay, the secondaries ending with a crescent of black; tail and sickle-feathers black, with greenish center, which should pervade all the color of the bird.

Such a cock mated with hens having ground color of golden-bay and with similar markings, especially regular wing-bars of such glossy black, is the best that can be done to produce desirable cockerels and pullets. If the ground-color of the back and wing-bows of the cock is very dark reddish-bay or maroon color, his male progeny will be most satisfactory.

GOLDEN PENCILED HAMBURGS.

The Golden Penciled Hamburg breeding-cock requires but a short description, being plain in his dress, compared with his spangled cousins. The tail should be black; sickle-feathers and tail-coverts black, each feather having a narrow, well-defined border of bay. The primaries reddish-bay on the outside web and black on inside. The inside webs of the secondaries should be penciled with black—the whole plumage, except tail and wings, clear reddish-bay.

This brief description of the Golden Penciled cock will answer for the Silver Penciled, only substituting white for bay in the color. It is only necessary to mate with standard hens and breed a *large number* of chicks, in order to select birds for exhibition. The fancier having a good strain and great numbers to select from has the best prospect of success as a prize-winner. Only a small per cent. approach nearly to perfection, while the plumage of many will show mossing, lacing or marbling in the ground-colors.

WHITE HAMBURGS.

Of White Hamburgs we have only to mate standard specimens, avoiding those showing a yellow tinge in the plumage, which is a fault common to all white fowls, more or less, and in many cases is caused, or much aggravated, by exposure to hot sunshine. We refer the reader to our instructions in another part of this book with regard to the importance of careful preparation, by washing, of all white fowls intended for exhibition.

The legs of this variety are flesh-color.

BLACK HAMBURGS

exhibited at the shows have been larger than the other varieties, and in some instances of different shape, approaching nearly that of the Black Spanish, having longer legs and not being so full breasted. Narrow-breasted birds are apt to be squirrel-tailed.

Breeding-stock should have the true Hamburg shape.

The combs of Black Hamburgs are liable to be ill-shapen or loose, owing, probably, to Spanish blood formerly introduced for the purpose of securing white ear-lobes. In selecting breeders it is important to avoid white in the face, red feathers in the hackle or saddle and long legs.

MR. Stoddard, H.H.

How to win po

